



16 August 2021



Dear 

Re: OIA request – Children in state care who are admitted to hospital

Thank you for your Official Information Act request received 2 August 2021 seeking information from Waitematā District Health Board (DHB) about children in state care who are admitted to hospital.

Before responding to your specific questions, it may be useful to provide some context about our services.

Waitematā is the largest and one of the most rapidly growing DHBs in the country, serving a population of around 650,000 across the North Shore, Waitakere and Rodney areas. We are the largest employer in the district, employing around 8,600 people across more than 80 locations.

In addition to providing care to our own resident population, we are the Northern Region provider of forensic mental health services and child rehabilitation services, plus the metro Auckland provider of child community dental services and community alcohol and drug services.

In response to your request, we are able to provide the following information:

Radio New Zealand has a number of questions about the policies and practices, if any, regarding admitting children in care to hospital.

The same questions apply to all 20 DHBs. By “care”, I mean state care of any kind. Please provide answers to the following under the Official Information Act:

- 1. What is the DHB’s policy regarding children in (state) care being:
 - a. admitted to hospital and**
 - b. admitted to hospital in lieu of a care placement?****

Waitematā DHB has special care baby units and maternity wards at both Waitakere and North Shore hospitals. In addition, there is one paediatric ward, Rangatira, for children aged 0-14 years old at Waitakere Hospital.

Waitematā DHB does not admit well children to these wards in lieu of care placements. We only admit unwell children who require hospital-level care. Children in state care whose health condition requires hospital-level care are admitted to hospital as the need arises.

Our child protection policy states that children should not be discharged from Rangatira ward, our paediatric ward, if there is no safe discharge plan.

Our guidelines for children in state care who are admitted to Rangatira ward are attached – please refer to **Attachment 1**.

2. Are children in care admitted to hospitals if placements cannot be found?

As outlined above, Waitematā DHB does not admit well children, for whom Oranga Tamariki cannot find placements, to its hospitals. Occasionally, a child's discharge may be postponed for a short period while Oranga Tamariki arranges a placement. Senior clinicians work together with Oranga Tamariki and the Police to ensure the safe discharge of babies and children in our care.

3. How many children in care are currently in hospital in the DHB?

4. Are there any children in care currently in hospital in the DHB?

5. Please provide figures for the past 5 years showing the number of children in care admitted to a DHB hospital, length of stay and reason for being admitted to hospital.

In response to questions 3, 4 and 5, this information is not held in a central database but in the individual clinical files of patients. Due to the highly sensitive nature of this information, only certain frontline clinical staff are able to review individual clinical files and it would not be appropriate to use a contractor to review the records. This would take these critical frontline staff away from their clinical work and prejudice our ability to provide core clinical services.

We have considered whether charging or extending the timeframe for responding to this aspect of your request would assist us in managing this work and have concluded it would not. We have, therefore, determined to refuse this element of your request under Section 18(f) of the Official Information Act 1982 due to substantial collation and research.

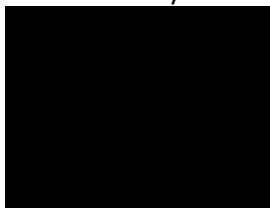
You have the right to seek an investigation and review of this decision by the Ombudsman. Information about how to seek a review is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or Freephone 0800 802 602.

I trust that the information we have been able to provide is helpful.

Waitematā DHB supports the open disclosure of information to assist community understanding of how we are delivering publicly funded healthcare. This includes the proactive publication of anonymised Official Information Act responses on our website from 10 working days after they have been released.

If you consider there are good reasons why this response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider your views.

Yours sincerely



**Executive Director Hospital Services
Waitematā District Health Board**

Appendix F: Responding to a Child Protection Alert

Refer also to WDHB Policy: *Child Protection Alert Management*

Issued by	Family Violence Steering Group	Issued Date	April 2019	Classification	01003-03-001
Authorised by	Family Violence Steering Group	Review Period	36 months	Page	22 of 27

This information is correct at date of issue. Always check on Waitemata DHB Controlled Documents site that this is the most recent version.



Clinical Practices
A-Z

Child Protection – Organisational Guideline

An alert indicates there have been child protection concerns about an unborn baby, child or young person (0-17 years). It is vital that a thorough assessment is undertaken at each presentation.

